

Media, PA – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) submitted public comments to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that offered a clear and candid rebuke of the agency's plan to tear down homes and businesses in Tinicum to add a runway to Philadelphia International Airport (PHL). The Congressman detailed specific faults in the way the FAA came to its conclusions in its Capacity Enhancement Plan (CEP). (The full text of the Congressman's comments follows this release.) To add an additional runway, the FAA would remove 70 homes and 80 businesses and would require the UPS facility, an important part of the area's economy, to relocate. —

"Our national and regional transportation infrastructure require dramatic improvement if we are to prosper in the increasingly competitive global economy," said Congressman Sestak. "Innumerable roads, bridges, seaports, railroads and airways urgently need attention. A comprehensive and innovative effort is required to correct this situation and I will continue to work with other members of Congress and all elected officials at the state and local level to do everything possible to make the economic capacity of the Delaware Valley second to none. That said, given the many flaws of the CEP, I cannot support it. As with the FAA's ill-conceived airspace redesign project, acceptable alternatives to the CEP have not been considered and the true costs have not been established. Unfortunately, instead of learning from the mistakes of the airspace redesign, the CEP repeats them. I will continue to challenge both the CEP and airspace redesign until the FAA better invests our tax dollars in plans and programs that comprehensively address our 21st century transportation needs. Our regional and national economies demand no less."

The history of planning and implementing the air space redesign project clearly illustrates what happens when there is not an early, coordinated response by elected officials to an incomplete plan proposed by a federal agency. That is why Congressman Sestak has placed a stake in the ground by issuing formal comments opposing the CEP at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Congressman calls on local, township, county, and state officials to work together to improve the CEP, and in particular oppose the sale of land that the City of Philadelphia will need to implement the expansion. Since the city lacks the power of eminent domain, the Congressman points out that this project can only move forward if the township, county or state governments acquiesce to the current plan.

According to the FAA, the CEP would reconfigure the airfield to provide four east-west parallel runways by extending existing Runway 8-26 and adding a new runway near the Delaware River; reconfiguring and expanding the terminal complex; reconfiguring the cargo areas and parking areas; relocating the Air Traffic Control Tower; and relocating navigational aids and lights.

Congressman Sestak's call to "hold the line" against the CEP stems not only from the devastating effects on the communities of Tinicum Township, but also from the fact that halting the progress of the CEP would also force a re-examination of the ill-conceived airspace redesign project and its negative impacts on Delaware and Chester County. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) found that the airspace redesign would only save an average of 18 seconds for flights departing PHL and 45 seconds for incoming flights – it will not appreciably improve the efficiency of PHL. To make matters worse, the FAA wants to compound that error by adding a runway – costing hundreds of local residents their homes and businesses - without conducting the necessary analyses to confirm adding the proposed runway is the best possible option. This is why the public comments submitted by Congressman Sestak and others are so important at the initial stage of the CEP.

The Congressman's comments clearly identify the shortcomings of FAA's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the plan. One key criticism is that the FAA "dictated a very limited range of alternative actions and stacked the deck against consideration of anything other than those selected for analysis in the DEIS. Anything other than expansion of runway capacity at PHL – such as greater use of other airports, other means of transportation and market-based congestion management – was rejected." The CEP was developed without proper consideration of delay-reducing alternatives that could have greater impact at less cost. Much like the airspace redesign, the CEP is a poorly planned transportation project and a waste of taxpayer funds.

The Congressman is also proposing litigation stemming from the City of Philadelphia's failure to comply with its own Noise Compatibility Program by not implementing non-abatement procedures of the program when the air space redesign went into affect. This litigation will be separate from the lawsuits brought against the FAA in federal court to stop implementation of the air space redesign.

“The current plans must not go forward without consideration of alternatives,” said Congressman Sestak. “I still have not seen any effort by the FAA to provide the Delaware Valley region with a well-planned, coordinated transportation network that makes full use of other airports in the region and interconnects air transportation with rails and highways to ensure that we have an efficient transportation system that benefits residents and businesses.”

Congressman Sestak further pointed out that methods used in the FAA’s analysis were dated and had been challenged by experts. In addition, the DEIS ignored significant research finding that children were particularly adversely impacted by aviation noise and, even after the GAO’s condemnation of the FAA for not determining the full cost of the air space redesign, the CEP DEIS included no cost breakdown of the chosen plan to increase capacity and did not estimate total costs.

“It has already been proven that the air space redesign in its current state does not have any significant impact on flight delays, but will have a considerable negative impact on the people over which more aircraft fly,” said Congressman Sestak. “Just as with its initial air space redesign, this flawed agency has not done due diligence in its efforts to reduce delays in the case of the CEP. Feasible alternatives were not seriously considered and costs, both fiscal and environmental, were not fully or appropriately measured. There is nothing in the DEIS that pertain to the views of affected parties, such as area businesses or Tinicum Township, or indicates that the FAA worked with them in developing this plan. Yet the proposed actions are threats to the existence of Tinicum and to the economic viability of these businesses.”

“The citizens of this nation and this region deserve better from the FAA. I will continue to fight that agency for more transparency and due diligence, while advocating causes that move us toward the comprehensive transportation improvements needed to improve our regional economy.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on

Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

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